Amendments to the claims:

1. (currently amended) A communication system, comprising:

first and second [[a]] control and/or drive ~~network~~ networks (11, 12) having network nodes (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), wherein each of said first and second control and/or drive networks (11, 12) has one master control unit connected to said network nodes, wherein said master control units are connected to a data base such that external commands for configuring the networks are delivered, wherein for operating industrial machines, control and/or regulating signals are exchanged between the network nodes via a closed ringlike signal line (6, 7),

wherein a first one of the network nodes exchanges signals with at least one further network node (1, 3) over a bidirectional signal path (10),

wherein at least one of said network nodes has a switchover unit (8), wherein said switchover unit is configured to be implemented via master/slave control units so that a switch position of said switchover unit is alterable,

wherein the switchover unit (8) is configured to communicate with two further network nodes (1, 3) via two bidirectional signal paths (10),

wherein the switchover unit (8) in a first switching position connects the two signal paths (10) via bidirectional conduction of the signals through the network node (2),

wherein the switching unit (8) in a second switching position interrupts the communication between the two signal paths and connects two signal courses (9) of at least one bidirectional signal path (10) to one another,

wherein the communication system is configured into different networks (11, 12) via at least one predetermined connection of a switchover unit (8) of at least one of the network nodes (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) to a switchover unit (8) of at least one further of the network nodes (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), and wherein the networks (11, 12) have separate signal lines (6, 7) from one another.

2. (previously presented) The communication system as recited in claim 1, wherein two network nodes (3, 4) of two networks (11, 12) are each mechanically connected to one another via two lines (9) between the two network nodes (3, 4).

3. (previously presented) The communication system as recited in claim 1, wherein a network node (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) is connected to a control unit (23).

4. (previously presented) The communication system as recited in claim 1, wherein each network (11, 12) has one control unit with a master function and at least one control unit with a slave function.

5. (previously presented) The communication system as recited in claim 1, wherein the switchover unit (8) is switchable via a software controller.

6. (previously presented) The communication system as recited in claim 1, wherein one network (11, 12) is configured in accordance with a leading axis and

the dependent following axes of a controller of a machine system and wherein control units which execute control tasks as a function of the leading axis and control units that execute control tasks as a function of following axes of the leading axis are combined into one network (11, 12).

7. (previously presented) The communication system as recited in claim 6, wherein the machine system is a printing machine (18) with a plurality of printing units (21).

8. (previously presented) The communication system as recited in claim 7, wherein a control unit (1) is connected to a further ring line (14), wherein the further ring line (14) is connected to drive mechanisms (13) of a printing unit (21), and wherein a control unit (1) controls the drive mechanisms (13) chronologically synchronously.

9. (previously presented) The communication system as recited in claim 7, wherein control units (1, 2, 3) of a plurality of printing machines (18, 20) are connected to one network (11, 12) and are supplied by the network with control signals, wherein a control unit performs a master function for further control units, wherein said further control units which perform slave functions.

10. (currently amended) A method for controlling a communication system, comprising the following steps:

providing a communication system, said communication system comprising first and second [[a]] control and/or drive networks ~~network~~ (11, 12) having network nodes (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) wherein each of said first and second control and/or drive networks (11, 12) has one master control unit connected to said network nodes, wherein said master control units are connected to a data base such that external commands for configuring the networks are delivered;[[,]]

exchanging ~~wherein for operating industrial machines,~~ control and/or regulating signals ~~are exchanged~~ between the network nodes via a closed ringlike signal line (6, 7) for operating industrial machines[[,]];

exchanging by ~~wherein~~ a first one of the network nodes ~~exchanges~~ signals with at least one further network node (1, 3) over a bidirectional signal path (10), wherein at least one of said network nodes has a switchover unit (8), wherein the switchover unit (8) is configured to communicate with two further network nodes (1, 3) via two bidirectional signal paths (10), and wherein said switchover unit is configured to be implemented via master/slave control units so that a switch position of said switchover unit is alterable[[,]];

connecting via ~~wherein~~ the switchover unit (8) in a first switching position ~~connects~~ the two signal paths (10) via bidirectional conduction of the signals through the network node (2)[[,]];

interrupting by ~~wherein~~ the switching unit (8) in a second switching position ~~interrupts~~ the communication between the two signal paths and connecting ~~connects~~ two signal courses (9) of at least one bidirectional signal path (10) to one another, wherein the communication system is configured into

different networks (11, 12) via a suitable connection of the switchover units (8) of the network nodes (1, 2, 3, 4, 5),and wherein the networks (11, 12) have separate signal lines (6, 7) from one another, and

performing a change in the configuration of the networks (11, 12) by means of software commands.

11. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 10, wherein if a malfunction occurs upon data exchange, a change in the configuration of the network is performed in order to exclude defective signal communication and/or a defective network node or a control unit from one network (11, 12).

12. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 10, wherein the configuration of the network is performed as a function of a configuration of a plurality of machines of a processing group in the form of a printing machine (18).

13. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 12, wherein if a malfunction occurs in a machine of the processing group, the network node which supplies the defective machine with control signals is excluded from the network (11, 12).